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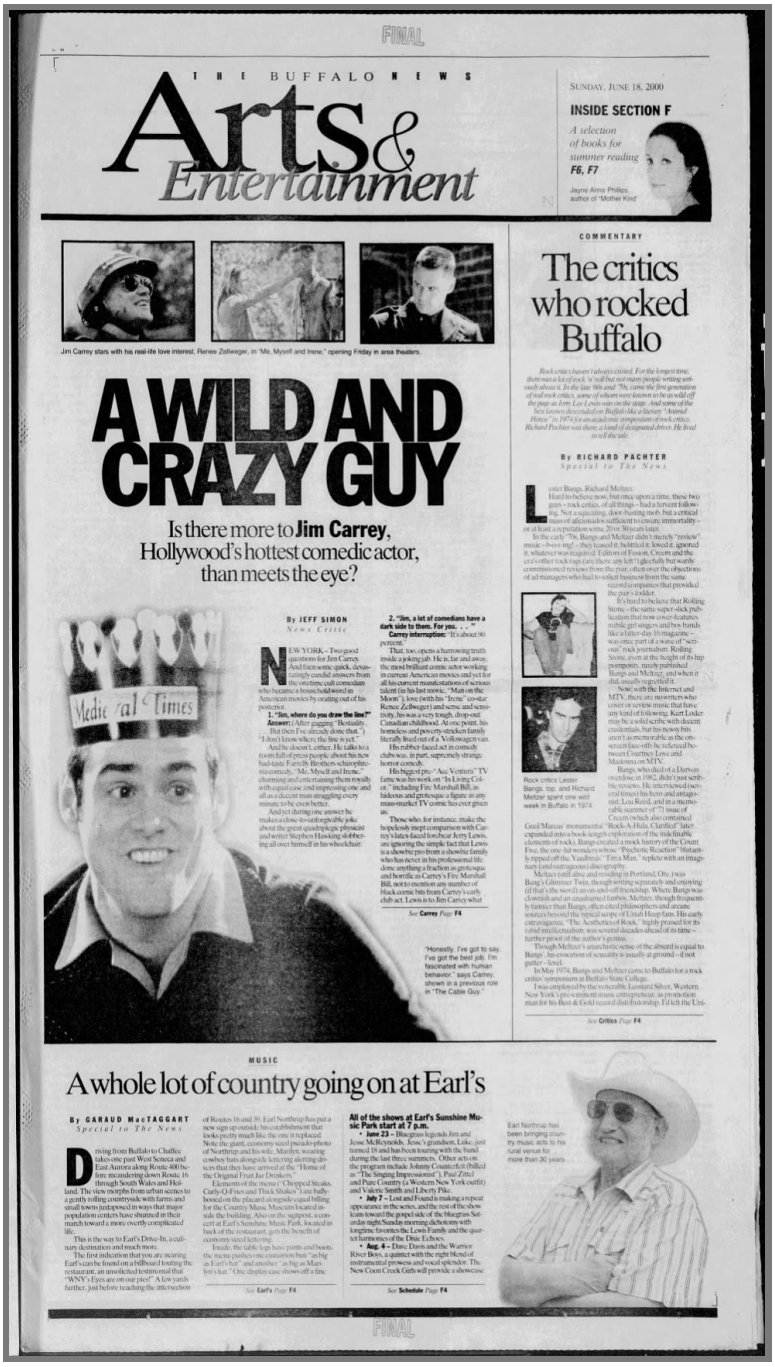

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THE BUFFALO NEWS

Arts & Entertainment

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INSIDE SECTION F

A selection of books for summer reading
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Jayne Anne Phillips, author of "Mother Kind"

Jim Carrey stars with his real-life love interest, Renee Zellweger, in "Me, Myself and Irene," opening Friday in area theaters.

A WILD AND CRAZY GUY

Is there more to **Jim Carrey**, Hollywood's hottest comedic actor, than meets the eye?

By JEFF SIMON
News Critic

NEW YORK – Two good questions for Jim Carrey. And then some quick, devastatingly candid answers from the onetime cult comedian who became a household word in American movies by orating out of his posterior.

1. "Jim, where do you draw the line?"

Answer: (After gagging "Bestiality.") But then I've already done that. "I don't know where the line is yet."

And he doesn't, either. He talks to a room full of press people about his new bad-taste Farrelly Brothers schizophrenia comedy, "Me, Myself and Irene," charming and entertaining them roosh, with equal ease and impressing one and all as a decent man struggling every minute to be even better.

And yet during one answer he makes a close-to-unforgivable joke about the great quadriplegic physicist and writer Stephen Hawking slobbering all over himself in his wheelchair

2. "Jim, a lot of comedians have a dark side to them. For you. . . ."

Carrey interruption: "It's about 90 percent."

That, too, opens a harrowing truth inside a joking jab. He is, far and away, the most brilliant comic actor working in current American movies and yet for all his current manifestations of serious talent (in his last movie, "Man on the Moon"), love (with his "Irene" co-star Renee Zellweger) and sense and serendipity, his was a very tough, drop-out Canadian childhood. At one point, his homeless and poverty-stricken family literally lived out of a Volkswagen van.

His rubber-faced act in comedy clubs was, in part, supremely strange, horror comedy.

His bugs-n'-pre-"Ace Ventura" TV fame was his work on "In Living Color," including Fire Marshall Bill, as hideous and grotesque a figure as any mass-market TV comic has ever given us.

Those who, for instance, make the hopelessly inept comparison with Carrey's latex-faced forebear Jerry Lewis, are ignoring the simple fact that Lewis is a showbiz pro from a showbiz family who has never in his professional life done anything a fraction as grotesque and horrific as Carrey's Fire Marshall Bill, not to mention any number of black comic bits from Carrey's early club act. Lewis is to Jim Carrey what

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"Honestly, I've got to say, I've got the best job. I'm fascinated with human behavior," says Carrey, shown in a previous role in "The Cable Guy."

COMMENTARY

The critics who rocked Buffalo

Rock critics haven't always existed. For the longest time, there was a lot of rock 'n roll but not many people writing seriously about it. In the late '60s and '70s, came the first generation of real rock critics, some of whom were known to be as wild off the page as Jerry Lee Lewis was on the stage. And some of the best known decamped for Buffalo like a literary "Animal House" in 1974 for an academic symposium of rock critics. Richard Pachter was there, a kind of designated driver. He lived to tell the tale.

By RICHARD PACHTER
Special to The News

Lester Bangs. Richard Meltzer.

Hard to believe now, but once upon a time, these two guys – rock critics, of all things – had a fervent following. Not a squealing, door-busting mob, but a critical mass of aficionados sufficient to ensure immortality – or at least a reputation some 20 or 30 years later.

In the early '70s, Bangs and Meltzer didn't merely "review" music – b-o-r-i-n-g! – they teased it, belittled it, loved it, ignored it, whatever was required. Editors of Fusion, Creem and the era's other rock rags (are there any left?) gleefully but warily commissioned reviews from the pair, often over the objections of ad managers who had to solicit business from the same record companies that provided the pair's fodder.

It's hard to believe that Rolling Stone – the same super-slick publication that now cover-features public girl singers and boy bands like a latter-day 16 magazine – was once part of a wave of "serious" rock journalism. Rolling Stone, even at the height of its hip pomposity, rarely published Bangs and Meltzer, and when it did, usually regretted it.

Now, with the Internet and MTV, there are no writers who cover or review music that have any kind of following. Kurt Loder may be a solid scribe with decent credentials, but his scoops bits aren't as memorable as the on-screen face-off he refereed between Courtney Love and Madonna on MTV.

Bangs, who died of a Darvon overdose in 1982, didn't just scribble his reviews. He interviewed (several times) his hero and antagonist, Lou Reed, and in a memorable summer of '71 issue of Creem (which also contained Greil Marcus' monumental "Rock-A-Hula Clarified" later expanded into a book-length exploration of the indefinable elements of rock), Bangs created a mock history of the Count Five, the one-hit wonders whose "Psychotic Reaction" "blatantly ripped off the Yardbirds' "Train Man," replete with an imaginary (and outrageous) discography.

Meltzer (still alive and residing in Portland, Ore.) was Bang's Glimmer Twin, though writing separately and enjoying (if that's the word) an on-and-off friendship. Where Bangs was clownish and an unashamed hayseed, Meltzer, though frequently funnier than Bangs, often cited philosophers and arcane sources beyond the typical scope of Uriah Heep fans. His early extravagance, "The Aesthetics of Rock," highly praised for its rabid intellectualism, was several decades ahead of its time – further proof of the author's genius.

Though Meltzer's anarchistic sense of the absurd is equal to Bangs', his evocation of sexuality is usually at ground – if not gutter – level.

In May 1974, Bangs and Meltzer came to Buffalo for a rock critics' symposium at Buffalo State College.

I was employed by the venerable Leonard Silver, Western New York's pre-eminent music entrepreneur, as promotion man for his Best & Gold record distributorship. I'd left the Uni-

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Rock critics Lester Bangs, top, and Richard Meltzer spent one wild week in Buffalo in 1974.

MUSIC

A whole lot of country going on at Earl's

By GARAUD MacTAGGART
Special to The News

Driving from Buffalo to Chaffee takes one past West Seneca and East Aurora along Route 400 before meandering down Route 16 through South Wales and Holland. The view morphs from urban scenes to a gently rolling countryside with farms and small towns juxtaposed in ways that major population centers have shunned in their march toward a more overtly complicated life.

This is the way to Earl's Drive-In, a culinary destination and much more.

The first indication that you are nearing Earl's can be found on a billboard touting the restaurant, an unsolicited testimonial that "WNY's Eyes are on our pies!" A few yards further, just before reaching the intersection of Routes 16 and 39, Earl Northrup has put a new sign up outside his establishment that looks pretty much like the one it replaced. Note the giant, economy sized pseudo-photo of Northrup and his wife, Marilyn, wearing cowboy hats alongside lettering alerting drivers that they have arrived at the "Home of the Original Fruit Jar Drinkers."

Elements of the menu ("Chopped Steaks, Curly-Q Fries and Thick Shakes") are ballyhooed on the placard alongside equal billing for the Country Music Museum located inside the building. Also on the signpost, a concert at Earl's Sunshine Music Park, located in back of the restaurant, gets the benefit of economy sized lettering.

Inside, the table legs have pants and boots, the menu pushes one cinnamon bun "as big as Earl's hat" and another "as big as Marilyn's hat." One display case shows off a fine

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All of the shows at Earl's Sunshine Music Park start at 7 p.m.

- **June 23** – Bluegrass legends Jim and Jesse McReynolds. Jesse's grandson, Luke, just turned 18 and has been touring with the band during the last three summers. Other acts on the program include Johnny Counterfit (billed as "The Singing Impressionist"), Paul Zittel and Pure Country (a Western New York outfit) and Valerie Smith and Liberty Pike.
- **July 7** – Lost and Found is making a repeat appearance in the series, and the rest of the show leans toward the gospel side of the bluegrass Saturday night/Sunday morning dichotomy with longtime favorites the Lewis Family and the quartet harmonies of the Dixie Echoes.
- **Aug. 4** – Dave Davis and the Warrior River Boys, a quintet with the right blend of instrumental prowess and vocal splendor. The New Coon Creek Girls will provide a showcase.

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Earl Northrup has been bringing country music acts to his rural venue for more than 30 years.

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